

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 IO-14 ACDA-19 OMB-01 NIC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /137 W

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R 291527Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1413

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION BERLIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 05112

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: THE SPD PREPARES TO FIGHT BACK

SUMMARY: THE SPD HAS NOT ONLY DECIDED TO MAKE AN ALL-OUT EFFORT IN THE LOWER SAXONY ELECTION CAMPAIGN, BUT HAS ADVERTISED ITS INTENTION. IT EXPECTS TO WIN, TOGETHER WITH THE FDP, ENOUGH SEATS TO CONINUE TO GOVERN. ITS RECENT FORTUNES HAVE BEEN SUCH THAT MERE MINOR LOSSES IN LOWER SAXONY CAN BE CELEBRATED AS A VICTORY. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE MOST RECENT REVERSES FOR THE SPD IN LOCAL

ELECTIONS (HAMBURG 0223 AND FRANKFURT 1835) LED THE SPD EXECUTIVE BOARD ON MARCH 26 TO CONSIDER AT LENGTH HOW IT CAN STEM THE SERIOUS LOSSES IT HAS CONSISTENTLY SUFFERED SO FAR THIS YEAR.

2. BOARD MEMBER BRUNO FRIEDRICH PRESENTED A PAPER ENTITLED THE "RENEWAL OF GODESBERG" DEDICATED TO THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "IDENTITY OF THE PARTY WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE VOTERS" AND SET SIX TASKS FOR THE SPD:

A. THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING DIFFERING OPINIONS WITHIN THE SPD MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO LEAD TO A LOSS OF CREDIBILITY WITH THE VOTERS.

B. THE "DOUBLE STRATEGY" PURSUED THUS FAR AS A TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC METHOD OF RESOLVING INTRA-PARTY CONFLICT HAS FAILED.

C. A POPULAR FRONT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE SPD.

D. THE SPD MUST BE THE GUARANTOR OF BOTH THE LAW AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

E. PARTY DECISIONS MUST KEEP IN STEP WITH THE TIMES.

F. THE SPD, AS A PEOPLE'S PARTY, MUST IDENTIFY ITSELF WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE VOTERS.

3. THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ALSO DECIDED TO MAKE THE NEXT LANDTAG ELECTION, IN LOWER SAXONY ON JUNE 9, THE OBJECT OF AN ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN USING THE SPD'S NATIONAL LEADERS LIBERALLY AND BEGINNING THE FIRST WEEK IN APRIL. FOL-LOWING THE MEETING, WHICH HE CHAIRED, THE CHANCELLOR TOLD THE PRESS THAT "AS EARLY AS LOWER SAXONY THE SPD AND FDP TOGETHER WILL SHOW THEY HAVE MORE SUPPORT THAN THE CDU."

4. COMMENT: BY CONCENTRATING SO OPENLY ON LOWER SAXONY, BRANDT IS APPARENTLY TAKING A CERTAIN RISK, BUT IT IS ONE IN WHICH THE DECK IS STACKED IN HIS FAVOR --AS HIS REMARK ABOUT THE "SPD AND FDP TOGETHER" REVEALS. THE SPD AT THE MOMENT HAS A TWO SEAT ADVANTAGE (75 TO 73) OVER THE CDU IN THE HANNOVER LANDTAG.

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THE FDP, WHICH ACHIEVED 4.4 OF THE VOTE IN THE LAND
ELECTION IN 1970, IS UNREPRESENTED. HOWEVER, AS THE
FDP ACHIEVED 8.5 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN LOWER SAXONY IN
THE BUNDESTAG ELECTION OF 1972, IT IS AN ODDS-ON
FAVORITE TO EXCEED THE 5 PERCENT THRESHHOLD THIS YEAR
AND THUS BE ENTITLED TO AT LEAST EIGHT DEPUTIES, AND
PROBABLY MORE. IF THE SPD LOSSES IN HANNOVER ARE SO
GREAT THAT IT CANNOT GOVERN EVEN WITH THE FDP, THEN
THE DISASTER WILL BE OF SUCH PROPORTIONS THAT THE FACT
THAT IT DELIBERATELY MADE LOWER SAXONY AN ELECTION OF
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PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE WILL HARDLY MAKE IT MUCH WORSE.

5. THE ELECTION IN LOWER SAXONY IS OF SOME ADDITIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR ANOTHER REASON AS WELL. AT THE MOMENT THE CDU/CSU CONTROLS THE BUNDESRAT AND THE SPD/FDP CONTROLS THE BUNDESTAG. A CDU VICTORY ON JUNE 9 WOULD NOT CHANGE THAT, BUT IT WOULD CHANGE THE VOTE IN THE BUNDESRAT'S COMMITTEES (WHERE BERLIN HAS A VOTE) FROM THE PRESENT 6 TO 5 IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THE REVERSE. THAT IS NOT A CRITICAL FACTOR, NOR IS THE FACT THAT A CDU VICTORY WOULD SWITCH THE PRESENT 12-10 MAJORITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO AN 11-11 STAND-OFF IN THE JOINT CONFERENCE COMMITTEE TO WHICH LEGISLATION IS REFERRED WHEN THE BUNDESRAT VOTES DOWN A BILL APPROVED BY THE BUNDESTAG, BUT IT WOULD MAKE THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS HARDER THAN IT IS.

6. THE SPD HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO MAKE A MAXIMUM EFFORT IN LOWER SAXONY. THAT IT WILL LOSE SEATS IS ACCEPTED BY THE SPD ITSELF AS INEVITABLE. BUT IF IT EMERGES TOO WEAK TO GOVERN WITH THE FDP, THE STRAINS WITHIN THE PARTY AND WITHIN THE COALITION WILL BECOME GREATLY EXACERBATED. THE FACT THAT THE FDP WILL BY THEN HAVE A NEW LEADER, GENSCHER (WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SAME PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO BRANDT AS DOES SCHEEL), WILL PROBABLY BE AN ADDITIONAL DESTABILIZING FACTOR FOR THE COALITION.

HILLENBRAND

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